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NEW CONCEPTS IN GUIDANCE SERVICES.

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INSTEAD OF A STRICTLY QUANTITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED LEARNER'S INTELLECT AND APTITUDE, GUIDANCE PERSONNEL SHOULD EMPHASIZE A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE "TOTAL LIFE EXPERIENCES" WHICH INTERACT WITH, AND SOMETIMES IMPEDE, THE LEARNER'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT. AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERSONAL-SOCIAL INFLUENCES IN A DISADVANTAGED CHILD'S LIFE WILL HELP EDUCATORS TO PRESCRIBE MEANINGFUL, EFFECTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR HIM. HOWEVER, JUST SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING MAKES PAINFULLY EVIDENT THE INADEQUACY OF THE INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE IN COUNSELING, WHICH AT PRESENT SEEMS TO STRESS THE CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO HIS DISADVANTAGED CONDITION. RATHER THAN MAINTAIN THIS APPROACH, COUNSELORS SHOULD IDENTIFY AND ACTUALLY CORRECT THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES WHICH CAUSE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE, AND INVOLVE THE HOME AND COMMUNITY IN THIS ENDEAVOR. ALSO, BOTH COUNSELORS AND TEACHERS SHOULD DRAW UPON THE CHILD'S FEELINGS ABOUT NEGRO AUTHORITY FIGURES, SUCH AS CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS, WHO CURRENTLY ARE STRUGGLING TO ELIMINATE SOCIAL DISADVANTAGEMENT. THUS, BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE EFFECTS OF, AND ACTUALLY CONTROLLING, THE CHILD'S ENVIRONMENTAL ENCOUNTERS, EDUCATORS WILL BETTER BE ABLE TO INCREASE HIS SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT. (LB)

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TO MEET THE NEEDS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

DR. NATHAN STILLMAN, CHAIRMAN

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I think it was the Indian philosopher Tagore who once said that man goes into a noisy crowd to drown the clamor of his own silence. This can be paraphrased, I think, to mean that very often teachers and others who are involved in work with children jump onto all kinds of bandwagons rather than develop any deep convictions about any issue themselves. It is much simpler to do that than to have to do a good deal of thinking. Thus far, in this conference, we have been subjected to a great many issues which require deep thought. I am sure that this afternoon's session will continue in the same vein. Our first speaker is Dr. Edmund Gordon who has already been introduced to you at the general session. He is chairman of the Department of Educational Psychology and Guidance here at the Graduate School of Education and the keystone of our Project Beacon efforts.

NEW CONCEPTS IN GUIDANCE SERVICES

01386

DR. EDMUND W. GORDON

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Thank you Dr. Stillman. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Our attention has been called to the significance of socially disadvantaged status and its impact on school learning and school adjustment in two very stimulating papers by Drs. Reissman and Hamburger and our two discussants. From their discussions I want to call attention to two rather important observations around which I would like to organize my own thoughts. The first is that the children with

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whom we are here concerned, constitute groups which when compared to what is currently demanded of them as well as with what is possible in human achievement, must be regarded as academically and socially undeveloped populations.

Now I don't need to go on to point out the fact that under development, under achievement,disadvantaged academic status are not universal in this population, but we are talking more generally about characteristics which are so frequently encountered in this population that they require our special attention. The two speakers and the two discussants have amplified this idea so much that I don't need to follow my notes here and do so. They have projected this problem in the context that involves an increasingly large number of persons that are urban dwelling, as opposed to a predominantly rural dwelling population of some past years, and discussed it in the context of the increasing technological development in our society, the growing competition for excellence in academic and intellectual pursuits and, of equal importance, in the context of some of the emergent concepts of intellectual potential. Here, I will refer to concepts that have been rather well developed by J. McV. Hunt in his recent book on experience and intelligence in which he predicts a raising of the upper limits of intellectual development for all persons, raising the implications that in the present day, under the present circumstances, the children that we are talking about must be viewed as children, who in terms of what is demanded and in terms of what we are coming to recognize as possible in human achievement, are intellectually, academically and, to some extent socially underdeveloped.

The second observation I want to refer to is that our educational systems , and the personnel who have concerned themselves with the problems of education, have developed few of the pedagogical and personal attitudes, understandings,

competences, resources and skills that are necessary to stimulate, develop and enhance the intellectual potential which is existent in socially disadvantaged children and probably in all children. Much has been said of the teacher whose background, both personal and social, and professional training, have left him relatively unequipped to meet the problems of this population; much of what has been said for these teacherscan be said for all school personnel. The kind of pedagogical concepts, the kind of pedagogical tools, the kind of pedagogical methods that may be necessary to meet the needs of these children who have been handicapped by social and economic differences are not at present a part of our common armamentarium. The challenge presented to all of us who are concerned with education is that we begin to develop new approaches, new compentencies and new concepts for meeting the needs of these children. Hunt has based the question in the context of a concern with the problem of the "match" and here he talks about the problem of the match between the specific character of the learner, the learning pattern of a given individual child and the specific management of the child's encounters with the environment that are required for the maximum development of this specific child. We have long been concerned in education with trying to identify the needs of children, the differences between children, and to modify educational procedure somewhat to meet their needs. Hunt suggests that far more drastic modifications can be made in the way in which we manage the individual environmental encounters so that the rate and the degree of intellectual development can be greatly increased. In our Project Beacon, considerable attention is given to the identification of learning strengths and specific learning disabilities. We are concerned with the specific nature of the learning deficit as well as the specific learning pattern or cognitive style of the child. We seek to identify those remedial

methods that are required to offset the disabilities and those learning experiences most complementary to existing strengths. The concept suggested here is one that dates back to at least the turn of the century in the work of Binet, who concerned himself with the possibility that the several factors that go to make up intelligence are themselves capable of modification. He talked about the trainability of intelligence, a concept that has been largely ignored except by a few educators involved in the education of brain injured and mentally subnormal children. I am suggesting my second observation here that those of us who are responsible for the education of socially disadvantaged children need to give attention to those weaknesses in our own training, our own skills and our own conceptualizations which handicap us in dealing effectively with the problems of attitude, of intellectual styles, of motivational constructs, and of untapped potential in the population with which we are dealing. Now what is the relevance of these two observations to our concern here this afternoon, with meeting the guidance needs of elementary school children?

I think in the first place, a far more meaningful approach to guidance is required than that which is provided by the concepts that have guided us in the past. It may be that we need to look at some of our concepts with a view to reformulation, others with a view to re-emphasis and probably still others with a view to discarding them and having them replaced with more valid and appropriate theories. In the remaining time with you, I would like to deal with some of these concepts.

I think that our concern with the problems of underprivileged children, socially disadvantaged children, children who are culturally different, leads us to some ideas that may have real meaning not only for the disadvantaged child,

but for all children. Among these ideas may be the need or requirement that we pay more than tangential respect to the systematic and continuous qualitative appraisal of children for whom we provide guidance services. Certainly most of our guidance practices have been concerned with the utilization of many approaches to the observation and classification of behavior from which we make estimates with respect to intellectual potential academic achievement and social adjustment. Evaluation and appraisal are not foreign concepts to us. However, I submit that we have probably been far less concerned with the qualitative aspects of appraisal and evaluation than the needs and characteristics of the population of which we concerned here today may require. In another paper I have developed the concept of topographical and tcpological studies of children. I used these terms to refer to the detailed qualitative analysis of the specific character of the learner and of the specific nature of the learner's experience. I see this kind of analysis as resulting only from qualitative as opposed to quantitative appraisal, descriptively as opposed to impressionistically reported, and leading not simply to diagnosis and classification but to prescription and treatment. Just as we study geographic areas to detemine the nature of the terrain, the kind of soil, the depth of ground water, the kinds of rock formations, etc., when we look at each child in a qualitative appraisal we need to study all factors that enable us to understand the specific character of the individual. In the topological study we are concerned with the way in which the child has developed, what has led up to it, what the events and circumstances have made for what is present, what are the conditions and the total life experience of this child that have made the current condition. So that the first concept I would suggest as possibly not new in guidance but probably reformulated and re-emphasized is this need to

pay considerably more attention to appraisal but not just quantitative appraisal, not just diagnosis and classification, but qualitative appraisal.

The second idea has to do with the use of this qualitative appraisal data as a basis for detailed prescription of learning experiences. Again we follow the position set forth by Hunt. It is very likely that the way in which individuals move ahead intellectually, the way in which individuals learn is greatly influenced by the nature of the organism which is to have the learning experience, and by the nature of the encounters, the experience, the learning experience to which the child is exposed. Translated into educational terms, it simply means that the content, the sequence, and the pattern of learning experience must be so organized, so designed that they facilitate and to some extent determine what is developed. This concern with the design of learning experiences may appear to take us away from the traditional concerns of guidance. I would like to think of guidance as the field that is concerned with educational architecture, the design of learning experiences in the light of the kind of insights, the kind of knowledge, the kind of understanding that has been arrived at from our qualitative appraisal. As we move into a period when the knowledge required for effective and adequate preparation of teachers is increasing, at a time when the requirements of certification of teachers are being moved in the direction of greater concentration upon academic content, it may very well be that the functions of the guidance person will have to focus on the individualized design of learning experience and facilitation of same as an adjunct and parallel service to the teacher's functional preoccupation with the content of the learning experience.

A third general concept and one which I think is most crucial, is our concern with guidance for this population. The needs of socially disadvantaged

children require that we remove the interview and counseling from their central and dominating position in guidance. If we look at the organization of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, if we look at some of the state certification requirements, if we look at some of our textbooks in guidance or if we look at much of our current practuce we see that all of them reflect an emphasis on the interview or the counseling relationship as essential, as probably the most important function of the guidance person. The one tool that we insist the guidance person have is competence in counseling. Testing, we may leave to the psychologists but under no circumstances may we neglect counseling. Nonetheless, guidance as a person to person process, through which information is provided, through which catharsis may be experienced, through which insight is achieved, or support is provided appears to be not enough if at all appropriate to our socially disadvantaged children. I suspect that under the influence of our exaggerated respect for the many forms of psycho-therapy, psychoanalysis and counseling we can come to view this person to person aspect of guidance, with the counseling relationship as central, as a tool of far greater significance, than it merits. I feel that guidance at the level of elementary education must be concerned with the motivation and facilitation of development and learning. I think a more productive approach might involve the identification and correction where possible of factors in both the physical and social environment which predispose to inadequate function and here we pick up one of the concluding remarks made in Dr. Hamburger's paper, it may be far more important in the development or redevelopment, in the education or rehabilitation of children who greatly handicapped by poverty, by prejudicial attitudes, directed toward them, opportunities, and by limited experiences, it may be far more important that we begin to make the significant changes in their conditions of life, modification and removal of the things that are standing in their way, rather than emphasizing

a change in the individual's attitudes towards these obstructions. Certainly, in a society where nothing could be done about poverty it may be advisable to counsel for adjustment to poverty. I consider it the least appropriate thing we can do to tell the person who is poor not to feel badly. A far more productive approach to rehabilitation would involve the development of meaningful learning and post school opportunities for upward mobility, and the involvement of these individuals, their families, their communities, and their schools in the process of changing those physical conditions of life, the social conditions of life, those conditions in family relationships, and in teacher-pupil relationship which make for maladjustment and under-productivity, rather than placing emphasis on a change in the attitude of the individual toward the competing forces. Particularly in view of the fact that very often the attitudes that we seek to change are attitudes of rejection, and rebellion against unwholesome forces. I think that this de-emphasis on counseling might very well lead guidance people into giving greater attention to providing the assistance the school and the school personnel may need, and the development of reciprocation, communication and cooperation between home, community, and school to end that maximal opportunities for development are achieved. Some attention in our conference has been directed toward the kinds of interpretations to parents, with respect to their children's school adjustment, that would make them somewhat more helpful to the school and to the child. Again, one of the speakers earlier has suggested that an opposite direction may also be effective. That is helping the school to use some of the insights, some of the contributions from home and community in facilitating the child's development and learning. A process of reciprocal communication, flowing between home, the community and the school is greatly needed and must draw much more heavily on that which home and community can contribute. This requires a more appropriate utilization of the content and material that is referable to the life and environment of the child.

Some of us have become concerned with the way in which our textbook-materials reflect this life and environment. And, of even greater importance, the way in which the experiences and values of some of our children are not reflected in our teaching materials. The guidance worker can do much to help teachers become more aware of and more sensitive to the meaning of life experiences of their pupils. And certainly in those areas where we already have primary responsibility, as in the preparation and use of guidance materials, we can do a far better job of relating our materials to the realities of the worlds in which our children live.

Probably at no point have we given adequate attention to the contribution which can be made to pupil growth through authority figure identification with the struggles of disadvantaged children and their families. It has been suggested that the current civil rights crisis and the struggle for equal rights, particularly in the Negro community, may provide a lever of immense usefulness in reaching minority group children. The teacher or the guidance worker who can use material derived from this source creatively may rapidly increase interest, involvement and motivation. Those of us who are or can be identified as sympathetic to or involved in the support of this struggle may find new and more meaningful bases for pupil-teacher identification. Similarly, some of the messages that have been developed in this struggle have pertinence. The appeal of the Negro Nationalists groups is in no small measure due to the concepts of self respect, race value, race pride and race expectation that their leaders preach. In many instances, this message has found sympathetic reception among some of the most disorganized and hopeless elements in the Negro community. We don't know whether it can be used in other contexts or by non-Negro authority figures but it deserves attention. The possibility that children can be more greatly motivated by material that relates to the problems that are immediate to their experience and concern is certainly not a new concept, but it is one that we cannot ignore.

The last point I will make, again in the context of this reduced emphasis on the counseling relationship and a greater emphasis on other aspects of guidance behavior in influencing the development of the child, is that we are not ready to throw out counseling. I think it would be somewhat idealistic and probably impractical to anticipate that in the immediate future the many things that stand in the way of the development of all children in our society, and these children in particular, will suddenly be changed. These children need support, interpretation and opportunities for ventilation. One of our counseling functions is to support and strengthen the child's ability to cope with destructive forces as long as they are operative, but this does not mean an acceptance of the implication that it will remain that way or should remain that way and one has no responsibility for changing it. There used to be a chap who wrote in one of the tabloid newspapers in New York on mental health and one of the more appropriate suggestions he made had to do with the value of resistance in mental health. He was talking about the extent with which a person is defeated simply by the feeling that there is nothing he can do about adversity. What we are suggesting here is that a part of our function in guidance is to strengthen children, help them to deal more effectively with the destructive forces, but not to simply accept them, but to help them to understand how they can resist, how they can fight back, how they can more appropriately equip and acquit themselves for and in the major struggles for survival and advancement. Another aspect of our function in guidance is to identify and nurture those attitudes, aspirations, and motivations which may be used productively in the maximal achievement of appropriate goals in education and socialization. And here I am concerned with the possibility that through family counseling, through individual counseling, but even more so through guided group interaction we can do a great deal about creating consciousness of potential, consciousness of what can be done, and recognition of those levers that can be used to move ahead, those

levers that can be used for salvaging unrecognized talents, unrecognized aspirations, and for developing fuller lives. Much of our efforts that identify interests, aptitudes, potentials in children stop at the point of identifying that which is present, presently observable, I am suggesting that if we de-emphasize our concern with counseling or adjustment, turn our focus to the broader areas of contact with the environment, to the broader areas of design in learning experiences, we may move into the area of the development of skills, the development of intelligence, the development of interest, the development of separation, the development of competence. If we recognize much of what is wrapped up in what we call behavior, is the product of that which has occurred in the past; the interaction between that which is and that which has been. It is possible that the potential for development is greater than what we presently recognize and by positive intervention to manipulate and modify that which is (the present experience), we may come close to the creation and achievement of much that we know to be possible for modern man.

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DR. NATHAN STILLMAN
CHAIRMAN

Our next speaker is perhaps best known for his work with gifted children. His most recent study has been reported in the press throughout the country. Dr. Tannenbaum is the Associate Dean here at the Graduate School of Education and at present he is also temporarily "on loan" to Mobilization for Youth where he serves as director of education. He will speak to us on Curriculum Perspectives for Slum Schools.